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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (10/20): THE GAZA CALM: "IN
ISRAEL'S INTEREST ONLY"

Main Stories:

Al Ayyam and Al Hayat Al Jadida lead with news that Egypt has delivered to Palestinian "officials", invitations for a summit with all Palestinian factions, and a draft plan for ending the Palestinian "political crisis." The "comprehensive national dialogue" meeting is set for November 9 in Cairo. Al Quds quotes Palestinian Authority President Abbas in its front page story pledging to, "adhere to any Arab League decision about [unity] talks" and stressing the need for: Arab oversight of security service reform, formation of a national unity government and commitment to PLO-signed agreements.

Al Quds runs a lead story on "extremist Jews" illegally entering the Al Aqsa mosque compound in Jerusalem under heavy Israeli police protection on October 19, and injuring three mosque guards. Articles appear on inside pages calling for greater protection of the mosque and holding Israel responsible for any, "triggered reactions" by Palestinians to the mosque breeches. The other two dailies also run front page stories on the incident, with Al Ayyam including news about Israeli West Bank settler violence against Palestinian farmers in the same story. A photo of settlers guarded by Israeli soldiers near Nablus in the West Bank, appears on the front pages of Al Ayyam and Al Hayat Al Jadida.

All front pages report on statements by Israeli President Shimon Perez and Defense Minister Ehud Barak about the need to shift the peace process to include negotiations between Israel and all Arab countries, as well as the Arab League. Barak is quoted calling for an Israeli peace initiative similar to the Arab one. Reporting does not reveal any details about Barak's plan.

Al Quds' front page reports on Hamas' statements about the "calm" with Israel quoting Hamas spokesman Abu Obayda saying, "Israel has not adhered to the calm agreement, which is not a permanent one. We have no confirmation of Israel's request that Egypt resume efforts to extend the calm." Al Quds adds that the Popular Liberation Front and Islamic Jihad factions also believe that Israel has not abided by the conditions of the calm. Another front page story about Gaza in Al Quds reports that Israeli protesters blocked the Kerem Shalom crossing to Gaza on October 19, calling for the release of kidnapped Israeli soldier Shalit. Protesters threatened to stop food supplies to Gaza until they had updated news of Shalit. Finally, Al Hayat Al Jadida reports on its front page that UNRWA has called for a lifting of Gaza crossing closures immediately. UNRWA's Operations Director John Ging is quoted stating, "poverty has reached unprecedented levels in the Gaza Strip."

Al Ayyam and Al Quds report on inside pages that Israel has begun expansion of the Kharsina settlement in eastern Hebron in the West Bank. The paper, citing Wafa, reports that Israel has built three new buildings and constructed infrastructure in the settlement.

Al Quds reports on an inside page that U.S. Consulate General and EU delegations visited the police academy in the West Bank city of Jericho on October 19 and expressed satisfaction over Palestinian Authority police computer and IT skills.

Al Quds and Al Ayyam run a front page AFP wire story about former U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell "abandoning" John McCain by endorsing Barack Obama for president. Another wire story (DPA) on Al Ayyam's front page states that credit cards could cause another

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financial crisis in the U.S. because of credit agreements cancelled by banks.

Weekend stories

Sunday, October 19

All dailies ran similar headlines that, "Jewish settlers disrupt the Palestinian olive harvest." The papers reported on settler attacks on Palestinian and international activists throughout the West Bank.

The latest attacks took place in Hebron during which one journalist and a foreign activist were injured and Israeli soldiers arrested 19 activists. All dailies feature the clashes, especially the attack on journalists, in front page photo coverage.

A front page photo of Consul General Jake Waller and Palestinian Authority President Abbas introduced reporting on a meeting between the two officials to discuss, "latest developments," in Al Hayat Al Jadida. Waller and Abbas met in Ramallah on October 18 to, "discuss efforts aimed at pushing the peace process forward."

The Jordanian King feels pessimistic about the peace process, "for the first time," according to headlines in all three dailies. The reporting came a day after Secretary General of the Arab League Mousa's comments appeared on all front pages, giving a read out of recent New York meetings and characterizing the peace process as, "chasing illusions."

Al Quds' front page reported news about a "verbal letter" sent by Secretary Rice to Hamas requesting that Hamas, "look at the changes taking place around" them. Hamas member Mahmud Al Zahar responded during an October 18 press conference in Damascus that Hamas, "always looks around, and we are always reassured of our political convictions. We stress that what we hear from the Americans is not sacred and has only brought disaster upon our nation." In October 18 reporting in Al Hayat Al Jadida and Al Ayyam, Hamas leader Haniyyah was quoted calling the economic crisis, "divine punishment of America."

Al Ayyam's front page reported comments made by Hamas leader Said Siyam stating that, "nobody, not any of the PLO factions, nor the regional or international powers, can give [Palestinian Authority

President] Abbas legitimacy [after January 9, the date Hamas contends Abbas' term ends.] In Fatah news, all dailies reported on the successful completion of preparations for the sixth general party conference to be held by the end of the year.

Saturday, October 18

Scores of anti-separation barrier protesters were injured in the weekly protests in the West Bank communities of Bilin, Nalin, Al Ma'sara and Im Salmona, according to all front pages. The coverage highlighted that Israeli soldiers fired rubber bullets and stun grenades at protestors.

Al Quds led with the headline, "Announced last August 22 by Israeli newspapers, but largely unnoticed: New Israeli plans put a freeze on East Jerusalem construction and development, while allowing for the continuation of drilling and digging activities in the Old City and underneath Al- Aqsa Mosque." The story quoted Mohammad Al Qaymery, an engineer and city planner who filed a request to extend the period to appeal the Jerusalem municipality "Plan 2020," noting

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that it will make development in the Old City and East Jerusalem, "extremely complicated if not impossible because of unreasonably stringent rules and regulations."

BLOCK QUOTES:

¶1. Bilal Al Hasan opines in Al Quds under the title "Acre events: Omen for a third Palestinian intifada"(10/20): "If the impetus for the two Palestinian intifadas came from the Israeli-Arab conflict... then a [third] Palestinian intifada launched from within the state of Israel will be based on different issues... related to equality and racial discrimination... Lawyer Hasan Jabarin asks if Israel can be brought before a UN international court... The answer is no, because Israel has not signed the Rome document authorizing the court... [Conflict between Arabs and the state of Israel] continues to grow in a new violent dimension, strengthened by Israeli intransigence and a growth in extremist political movements inside Israeli society. The elements of confrontation are gathering together as dark clouds gather before a storm."

¶2. Regular columnist Talal Okal opines in Al Ayyam under the title, "Calm - a cost-benefit analysis" (10/20): "Only the naive believe that the calm [in Gaza] served Palestinian interests, since Israel alone has benefited from it, [taking the opportunity to] escalate aggression against the West Bank... To date, Israel has refused to abide by its commitments under the calm agreement, specifically the lifting of all restrictions on the flow of goods into Gaza... For some time now we have been reading and hearing statements made by leaders of different [Palestinians] factions, including Hamas, indicating... the need to reconsider [renewing the calm]... extending the agreement should be based on new conditions and ensured guarantees."

Walles